

THE HONORABLE RICHARD A. JONES

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
WESTERN DISTRICT OF WASHINGTON
AT SEATTLE

BLACK LIVES MATTER SEATTLE-
KING COUNTY, ABIE EKENEZAR,
SHARON SAKAMOTO, MURACO
KYASHNA-TOCHA, ALEXANDER
WOLDEAB, NATHALIE GRAHAM,
AND ALEXANDRA CHEN,

Plaintiffs,

v.

CITY OF SEATTLE,

Defendant.

No. 2:20-cv-00887-RAJ

DECLARATION OF EMMA WILSON IN
SUPPORT OF PLAINTIFFS' MOTION FOR
CONTEMPT

I, Emma Wilson, declare and state as follows:

1. The information contained in this declaration is true and correct to the best of my knowledge, and I am of majority age and competent to testify about the matters set forth herein.

2. I am a marketing manager and live in the Capitol Hill neighborhood of Seattle.

3. Since the protests in support of Black lives began in Seattle following George Floyd's murder in May, my partner and I have regularly participated in demonstrations in Capitol Hill.

1 4. On July 25, 2020, my partner and I joined an anti-police brutality protest. We
2 participated a march that started near Cal Anderson Park in Capitol Hill at approximately 2:00
3 p.m., and circled through the neighborhood before looping back to the park later that afternoon.

4 5. At approximately 4:15 p.m., on the corner of 12th and Pine as we were returning
5 to Cal Anderson, police officers on bikes showed up without any discernible warning. It was a
6 sudden and scary show of force—the officers seemed to have been lying in wait further up Pine,
7 before swiftly rolling down in a military-like “V” formation, hitting the right side of the march
8 and splitting the group of marchers into two. To my observation, the march had been
9 overwhelmingly peaceful all afternoon—although a few individuals had thrown rocks at
10 windows, causing superficial property damage—so I was taken by the sudden and severe law
11 enforcement presence.

12 6. **As they hit the intersection of 12th and Pine, the officers began rapidly and**
13 **repeatedly deploying flash bang grenades and some kind of chemical gas indiscriminately**
14 **into the crowd. I don’t know whether the gas was tear gas or aerosolized pepper spray, but**
15 **it stung my eyes, burned my throat and lungs, and caused my partner and me to cough.**
16 **The gas canisters and grenades landed throughout the crowd and at random. I couldn’t**
17 **tell who, if anyone, the police were aiming at, or what we might have done to provoke the**
18 **attack—but everyone was affected because it was so indiscriminate.**

19 7. **During the march, my partner and I had remained towards the back of the**
20 **crowd, with families, elderly people, and those with disabilities or other mobility issues.**
21 **Some of these individuals now struggled to get out of the line of fire.** Split off from the front
22 half of the group, we all tried our best to stick together and retreated back to 12th and Pike to get
23 away from the officers. Some marchers were panicked and disoriented, stumbling into one
24 another as we hurried away from the police line. We then had to turn up Pike because a flanking
25 group of officers had appeared on the horizon around 12th and Union, visibly blocking our
26 egress. Eventually, my partner and I rejoined the main group of protesters back on Pine by the

1 park, where the other half of the marchers continued to suffer an onslaught of gas, spray, and
2 flash bang grenades.

3 8. This initial law enforcement assault stretched into a two-hour-long ordeal. It was
4 rhythmic, with police surging forward to forcibly push us west down Pine towards Broadway
5 and as far back as Harvard, and then retreating back up to 11th and Pine, at which point the
6 protesters would regroup and gather on Pine by Cal Anderson again.

7 9. **Throughout these two hours, police continuously fired flash bangs, gas, and**
8 **pepper spray into the crowd without warning, often in rapid bursts, causing waves of near-**
9 **panic as we all tried to hold our ground despite the chaos. I watched multiple thrown**
10 **explosives (flash bangs and what I now know are “blast balls”) *detonate both above***
11 ***protesters’ heads and right at their feet.* Clouds of chemical irritants wafted down the street,**
12 **again choking our lungs and stinging our eyes and skin.** At one point, I was stunned to see a
13 tank-like vehicle following the police line as it forced us west; an armed sentry was visible
14 overlooking the scene from a hatch at the top of the vehicle, holding what looked like an assault
15 rifle. The entire experience was terrifying; I couldn’t believe the scale of the police response.

16 10. **Faced with the sudden barrage of gas, flash bang grenades, and pepper**
17 **spray, the crowd often jolted backwards on Pine in a way that I feared would cause people**
18 **to fall and be trampled underfoot. People were trying not to panic, but I think we were all**
19 **afraid, and some individuals moved very suddenly and haphazardly as they tried to**
20 **escape—often blindly because they had been maced—causing others to fall or be shoved to**
21 **one side as they passed. This struck me as extremely dangerous, with the potential for**
22 **vulnerable individuals to be trampled in the event of a panicked stampede.**

23 11. The police escalated the chaos by increasing the pace of each retreat, in some
24 cases pinning people against the retention wall surrounding Seattle Central and forcing them to
25 scramble up onto the grassy lawn at the corner of Harvard and Pine in order to get out of the
26 way. At one point, as we turned the corner onto Harvard, **I looked back to see the police throw**

1 more explosives onto that lawn, where people were very clearly retreating. A flash bang or
2 stun grenade exploded near one of our friends—a Seattle Public Schools teacher—leaving
3 her noticeably dazed. I had to scream her name and physically pull her out of harm’s way
4 because she was too stunned to react as the crowd and police continued moving.

5 12. My partner and I were extremely lucky not to be injured. Our eyes were burning,
6 and we were coughing and gasping from the chemical smoke or gas in the air. But, fortunately,
7 we escaped serious harm and stayed, despite our fear, until around 6:00 p.m. to support the other
8 protesters. Eventually we succumbed to exhaustion and realized that we were putting ourselves
9 at risk of injury if we stayed any longer; the situation had continued to deteriorate, and the
10 atmosphere was growing increasingly panicked. At that point, we went home.

11 13. Both my partner and I are committed to standing up against police brutality and
12 systemic racism, and we plan to continue protesting for as long as we’re able. But we have been
13 appalled by the Seattle Police Department’s tactics in the last few months and know that every
14 time we go out to make our voices heard, we are putting ourselves at risk. Simply by being
15 present, we face the possibility of suffering serious physical harm due to the sudden and random
16 nature of the department's tactics, which I have personally witnessed escalate the tensions
17 between protesters and police.

18 14. I am deeply disappointed that rather than seeking to “serve and protect”
19 Seattleites exercising their First Amendment rights, the police have demonstrated grave contempt
20 and aggression towards them, wielding “less lethal” weaponry at seemingly every opportunity.
21 It is a hard thing to come to terms with, but especially after experiencing the length and severity
22 of the police assault on July 25—when, as far as I could tell, the crowd was overwhelmingly
23 peaceful, and doing nothing more than marching when we were attacked—I have come to realize
24 that SPD is willing to violently retaliate against citizens seeking police reform.
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1 Executed this 4th day of August 2020 at Seattle, Washington.

2 I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the United States and the State of
3 Washington that the foregoing is true and correct.

4
5 By 

6 EMMA WILSON
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